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## ALLOCATIONS POLICY

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### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Sapphire Independent Housing provides good quality, low cost accommodation for single people and families who are in housing need.
- 1.2 The Association provides both general needs and supported accommodation.
- 1.3 The Association currently owns 367 units of accommodation and manages a further 7 – see Appendix 1.

### 2.0 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the policy are to:
  - Allocate our properties to those in greatest housing need
  - Achieve sustainable tenancies and balanced communities
  - Treat applicants equally and fairly
  - Use our stock effectively
  - Comply with legislation and regulatory requirements
  - Work closely with both statutory and voluntary agencies

### 3.0 Housing Needs

- 3.1 Sapphire Independent Housing will produce an annual summary document of lettings during the year and determine any policy and/or procedural changes required.
- 3.2 Sapphire Independent Housing will review its access routes on a regular basis to ensure its identified client groups are able to fully gain access to its services, subject to contractual arrangements in place.
- 3.3 Service Specifications (particularly for Supported Accommodation) and nomination/referral agreements with Local Authorities with whom it works have been agreed.

### 4.0 General Needs Access Routes

- 4.1 Sapphire Independent Housing does not operate a waiting list. Void units are allocated to applicants from the following sources
  - 4.1.1 Self-Contained Units
    - Local Authority
    - Sapphire Independent Housing residents in temporary accommodation
    - internal transfer
    - self referral

Priority is given to Sapphire Independent Housing residents who have completed a resettlement programme. In the event of there being no suitable internal candidate, self referrals will be considered.

#### 4.1.2 Temporary (Hostel) Accommodation

- self referral
- homeless agencies working across London

### **5.0 Supported Accommodation**

5.1 Supported bedspaces are commissioned by the respective Local Authority.

### **6.0 Selection Criteria**

6.1 Some schemes have specific admission criteria for applicants.

6.2 Selection criteria for general needs schemes are attached – see Appendices 2 and 3. The Association has specialist accommodation for women or men only, older people, and people recovering from drug and alcohol dependency.

### **7.0 Priorities for Selection**

7.1 In order to house those in greatest need, the Association prioritises applications received.

7.2 Local Authority nominations will not be graded as needs have already been assessed and the nomination is to a specific vacancy.

7.3 Internal applicants from the Association's temporary accommodation and who have completed a pre-tenancy training programme will take priority.

7.4 Housing allocations for external applicants are prioritised and accessed by the following factors:

- History and length of homelessness/housing need.
- Victims/at risk of harassment/domestic violence
- Existing tenure

7.5 Where there is more than one eligible applicant, the Association grades and points these grounds by the guidelines found in Appendix 4.

### **8.0 Transfers**

8.1 All transfer requests (for permanent accommodation) will be recorded.

8.2 Offers of transfers will be made in strict date order, except in the case of emergency moves in which case the Head of Operations Support Services and the Chief Executive will use discretion.

8.3 The transfer list should not be used by tenants as a means of securing a more "favourable" area. If one or more of the grounds for applying for a transfer are not met, the application will be rejected.

8.4 The grounds for applying for a transfer are:

- i. Where a tenant is subject to violence or harassment
- ii. Medical grounds
- iii. Where a tenant wishes to change area because of a training course, job or other local connection.
- iv. Where a tenant wishes to change type of housing i.e. to permanent shared or care grounds

Before a decision is reached on an application, supporting evidence will be required. Final approval will be required from the Chief Executive

## **9.0 Mutual Exchanges**

9.1 Under the 1985 Housing Act (as amended by the 1996 Housing Act), subject to the Association's written consent, secure residents have a right to exchange with other secure resident by way of assignment of their tenancy. Assured residents of the Association have a similar contractual right to assign their tenancies to secure or assured residents.

9.2 A mutual exchange can be arranged with a council, Housing Association or occasionally a private resident.

9.3 Consent to exchange will duly be withheld only on the grounds set out in Schedule 3 of the Housing Act 1985. Applicants to exchange will need to meet the scheme specific criteria so that the aims of the provision continue to be met.

## **10. Decants**

10.1 It may also be necessary to decant residents from a property to facilitate major repair or improvement works to be carried out.

10.2 Decants will receive highest priority.

## **11 Allocation Procedure**

11.1 Allocations meetings (permanent only) will carry out the following tasks:

- Acceptance or rejection of the application for housing, subject to verification and assessment, including home visit.
- Consideration of applications for transfer and where applicable, grading and points levels.
- Allocation of all housing vacancies.

11.2 All decisions on allocations will be recorded by the Head of Operations Support Services and a recommendation made to the Chief Executive for final approval.

## **12 One Offer Policy**

12.1 All applications for housing will be made one reasonable offer only. This will be made clear to applicants.

12.2 If applicants for housing reject a reasonable offer their application will be deemed closed.

## **13.0 Appeals and Complaints Procedure**

13.1 Any person wishing to appeal against a decision should follow Sapphire Independent Housings Appeals procedure.

**14.0 Accommodation Available for Letting**

14.1 The Association may only allocate to voids, which meet the minimum standards. These include:

- be structurally stable and free from serious disrepair
- be free from dampness prejudicial to the health of the occupant
- have adequate provision for lighting and ventilation and have a minimum of one heating appliance
- have a suitably located WC for the use of the occupant
- have a suitably located bath or shower and basin, each of which are provided with hot and cold water
- have an effective drainage system for foul, wash and surface water.

14.2 True voids will be defined as:

- Properties being let for the first time in newly built/newly refurbished schemes
- Voids created as a result of residents moving to other landlords
- Voids created by residents transferring within Sapphire Independent Housing stock
- Voids created by a death of a resident
- Voids created by residents buying their own property
- Voids created by eviction or abandonment
- Voids created by permanent transfers from properties undergoing major works

**15.0 Accountability**

15.1 Sapphire Independent Housing will make available to applicants information about the allocation policies, practices and procedures and the specific service.

15.2 Sapphire Independent Housing will consult with residents and other stakeholders on any proposed changes to its allocation practices.

15.3 An annual lettings report will be presented to the Board.

## APPENDIX 1

## Borough and Housing Type

Borough	Scheme	Units	Client group	Referral Route
Brent	St Eugene Court	25 permanent self contained flats	People over the age of 55	Direct applicants Nominated agencies
Camden	Caulfield Court	18 permanent self contained flats	Single Homeless	Direct applicants Internal applicants from SIH hostels
Camden	Conway House	60 hostel units (en suite)	Single Homeless Men	Camden Hostel Pathway agencies
Camden	Dunne Mews	8 permanent self contained flats	People over the age of 55	Direct Applicants Internal applicants from SIH hostels
Camden	Forde House	4 permanent self contained flats	Single people	50% Camden CBL. Direct applicants
Camden	Hackett House	7 temporary units	People leaving rehab/detox	Camden Pathway
Camden	Highgate Road	20 permanent self contained flats	Single Homeless	Direct applicants Internal applicants from SIH hostels
Camden	Tara Lodge	6 permanent family units	Families	Camden Council CBL
Westminster	St Louise	96 direct access hostel bed spaces	Single Homeless women over 21	Self Referral and Homeless Agencies
Islington	Bethany House	60 Supported bed spaces  33 direct access bed spaces	Single homeless women	Islington SP  Self referral and Homeless Agencies
Hertsmere	Townsend House	18 hostel bedspaces	Single Young Women	Hertfordshire Council Herts Young Homeless
Hertsmere	Hepburn Court	12 temporary units	Homeless families	Hertsmere Council

## Managed/Leased Properties

Camden	Brecknock Road	7 temporary units	People leaving rehab/detox	Camden Hostel Pathway agencies
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## HOSTEL

**(General Needs)****APPENDIX 2****1.0 Selection Criteria**

1.1 The following are eligible to apply for accommodation:

- all applicants assessed by Sapphire Independent Housing to be in housing need, and
- All applicants must be single and aged between 19 - 65

1.2 Applicants must be in housing need and have a low income, for instance,

- roofless
- squatting
- living in a night shelter/hostel or other institution
- living in very poor housing conditions
- living with relatives/friends with no home of their own
- subject to harassment
- subject to domestic violence
- at risk from violence
- subject to overcrowding

1.3 The following are ineligible for housing:

- applicants outside the scheme's admissions criteria
- applicants whose support needs are assessed as "too high" for the scheme
- applicants assessed as presenting a risk to other residents, staff or the general public
- those convicted of arson, except in exceptional circumstances
- applicants who have been convicted of racial harassment or who have been evicted for harassment of any kind, except in exceptional circumstances.
- applicants who have been evicted from other Sapphire Independent Housing property
- applicants who own property/land.

**2.0 Allocation**

2.1 Applicants for hostel accommodation will be accepted on a 'first come first served' basis.

2.2 Applicants with a local connection are prioritised.

**3. The Referral Process**

3.1 Applicants for hostel accommodation will be accepted on a 'first come first served' basis.

3.2 Referrals are accepted from either pan-London agencies or the applicant him/her self. Agencies are expected to ensure the applicant meets the referral criteria.

3.3 All applicants will be asked to fill out an application form. Once completed, the applicant will be interviewed and if suitable for the accommodation, will be offered to view the room/facilities. If the applicant accepts the accommodation, the license agreement will be explained and signed.

**4.0 Monitoring and Review Arrangements**

- 4.1 Applications are monitored. Referral source, age, sex, disability and ethnic origin will be monitored to meet Sapphire Independent Housings Equal Opportunities Policy.

## APPENDIX 3

**PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION****1.0 Selection Criteria**

- 1.1 The Local Authority must ensure that their referral meets the scheme criteria.
- 1.2 For self referrals, the following criteria will apply for eligibility:
- i. the person must be non-priority homeless unless a specific arrangement is agreed with the Local Authority.
  - ii. the person must meet the scheme criteria
  - iii. the person must be in housing need and will be either:
    - literally roofless
    - squatting
    - living in a hostel or other institution
    - living in very poor housing conditions
    - living with relatives/friends with no home of their own
    - being evicted with no legal grounds to resist
    - subject to harassment
    - subject to domestic violence
    - at risk from violence
    - subject to overcrowding
- 1.2 SAPPHIRE INDEPENDENT HOUSING will not house applicants with support needs if external support is not arranged prior to their referral.
- 1.3 SAPPHIRE INDEPENDENT HOUSING will not house applicants convicted of arson.
- 1.4 SAPPHIRE INDEPENDENT HOUSING will not accept applicants who have been convicted of racial harassment or who has been evicted for harassment of any kind.
- 1.5 Those who have been evicted from an SAPPHIRE INDEPENDENT HOUSING property.
- 1.6 Those who own property/land.

**2.0 Assessment**

- 2.1 When allocating a property the following steps should be considered.
- Would the person be able to cope with living independently? This assessment, whSapphire Independent Housing will include a home visit, should be made at the interview stage, with questions such as budgeting, own identified support needs, contacts with statutory services, housing history etc.
  - SAPPHIRE INDEPENDENT HOUSING wishes to maintain sustainable communities, therefore it would not be appropriate to allocate all units to people with particular support needs (unless the scheme is identified for that particular client group).
  - The applicant/referral may choose to be accompanied during the assessment process, by his/her referral worker, support worker, family member or friend.

**3.0 Allocation of Self Contained Permanent**

3.1 To enable the Association to assess priority between eligible applicants the following criteria will be used:

- The severity of the applicants existing housing condition
- The length of time the applicant had to put up with the condition
- The suitability of the applicant for the scheme.

3.2 A points system has been devised – see Appendix 4 below.

**4.0 Nomination Agreements**

4.1 Nominations to SAPPHIRE INDEPENDENT HOUSING for permanent housing on the basis of assured tenancies can only be made to persons by the Local Authority as per agreement.

**5.0 General**

5.1 If the offer is refused or not responded to, the application will be deemed closed.

5.2 Applicants with arrears will not be considered for housing/transfer.

5.3 Tenants may only use the transfer procedure to move from "like to like", i.e. tenants in shared accommodation may only transfer to shared accommodation.

5.4 All offers of accommodation, including under the transfer policy, are subject to SAPPHIRE INDEPENDENT HOUSING's One Reasonable Offer policy.

5.5 The transfer application form is attached as **Appendix 5**. Transfer requests will not be considered other than those applications submitted on this form and supported by the referring Manager.

**APPENDIX 4****POINTS SYSTEM (Permanent Accommodation)**

Where there are more than one eligible applicant, points are allocated for the purposes of allocation (to be used in addition to the general requirement) as outlined below:

<b>1. History and length of homelessness</b>	
Less than 3 months	10
3-6 months	20
6-9 months	30
9-12 months	40
1 year +	50
<b>2. Harassment/ Domestic Violence</b>	
All cases	50
<b>3. Health (Physical and mental)</b>	
All cases supported by a medical report	30
<b>4. Existing Tenure</b>	
Overcrowded conditions	10
Staying with friends	20
Squatting	20
Short stay hostel	20
B&B	20
Independent accommodation in disrepair	10

APPENDIX 5

**TRANSFER REQUEST**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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Reason for transfer (include schemes that you wished to be considered for)  
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Support worker/managers comments\_  
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Approved/Rejected by - \_\_\_\_\_  
Reason - \_\_\_\_\_  
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Recommend by \_\_\_\_\_

Approved----- Date-----